



Committee on Homeland Security Democrats

Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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March 3, 2005

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TOP DEMOCRAT ON HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE: MISPLACED PRIORITIES MAKE UP PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Washington, DC — Congressman Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member of the House Homeland Security Committee, said the President's budget request consists of "misplaced priorities" in a statement to the House Budget Committee for its "Member's Day" Fiscal Year 2006 Budget hearing.

"The President's budget is full of misplaced priorities and continues the trend of wasting time and tax-dollars when we should be protecting our nation against the next attack," said Congressman Thompson.

Congressman Thompson's statement described several crucial security gaps and made suggestions for improvements, including the following:

1. The President's budget only provides for 210 new border patrol agents on the southern border and not a single new officer along the northern border. Representative Thompson called for fulfilling the recently-enacted intelligence reform law's commitment to hiring 2,000 new agents a year.
2. Today, cargo that goes under our seats on commercial aircraft is not screened for explosives. The President's budget proposes no new funds to close this security gap. Representative Thompson proposed funding air cargo screening at \$200 million, the maximum amount that can be spent under present law.
3. The President's budget is nearly \$100 million short of what is needed to screen for weapons of mass destruction at our ports and borders. Representative Thompson proposed \$217 million in funding this year for portal scanning monitors.
4. The President's budget cuts programs for police, firefighters, and paramedics by more than 10%, or \$240 million, and does not dedicate any funding for improving first responders' communication equipment. Representative Thompson proposed \$2.9 billion in dedicated funding to meet first responders' needs.